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THE PREHISTORIC MEN OF KENTUCKY.

By Col. Bennett H. Young.

Indicating, it would seem, a revival of public interest in the study of aboriginal life in America, is the appearance of this new work on Kentucky archæology, closely following the two ponderous volumes on "The Stone Age in North America," by Prof. Warren K. Moorehead, issued in January from the Riverside Press at Cambridge, Mass. Col. Young's book, from the publishing house of John P. Morton & Co., Louisville, Ky., is a large quarto volume of 341 pages, beautifully printed and well illustrated. It was prepared as No. XXV of the Filson Club publications, "to commemorate the Silver Anniversary" of that organization, for which purpose no more appropriate subject could have been suggested. As a commentary upon the earliest inhabitants of Kentucky, it bears the further explanatory title of "A History of What is Known of Their Lives and Habits, Together with a Description of Their Implements and Other Relics, and of the Tumuli which have Earned for Them the Designation of Mound Builders."

Colonel Young, a native of Kentucky, was a Confederate officer in the civil war, and is now a prominent attorney of the Louisville bar. Considering that it was not until after his election as a member of the constitutional convention of 1890 that he turned his attention seriously to investigating the prehistoric antiquities of his native state, his perfect familiarity with the whole field of which he treats is surprising. Every page of the book attests the author's zeal and untiring labors, as well as his remarkable command of language in detailing their results. In the preliminary chapter he reviews, fully and very fairly, the old controversy over the identity of the Mound Builders, stating all the principal facts and inferences supporting, on one hand, the belief that they were a distinct race, superior in civilization and mechanical arts to the Indians, flourishing here for an indefinite period

of time, then were finally driven away, or exterminated, by invading hordes of red savages; and, on the other hand, the array of testimony in proof of the contention that the red Indians were the real builders of the mounds, no other race but them having ever inhabited either continent of America prior to the coming of Columbus. He, however, gives no intimation of his own views upon this question, leaving the reader to form his individual conclusions from the premises stated. The age of the mound building era, he estimates to have been from 600 to 1,000 years.

The succeeding chapters are altogether descriptive of prehistoric remains in Kentucky, referring to those of other states and countries only when necessary for comparison and illustration. For convenience of description the antiquities of the state—many of which are truly wonderful—are classified, as is usual in treatises of this kind, and each class subjected to critical examination separately.

The relics of the primitive occupants of Kentucky afford no special types peculiar to that state, but only prove, in their diversity, that that region, situated between Ohio and Tennessee, former centers of different well-marked aboriginal culture, was the neutral hunting and camping ground of both peoples, or successively the possession of each. Though not limited by imaginary lines that now define our states, the early Indians settled in chosen habitats, to which they clung until lured to some other presenting superior advantages, or were driven away by more powerful invaders. The tribe, or tribes, whose burial of their dead in graves lined and covered with thin flagstones has given them, by us, the distinctive name of the Stone Grave Indians, having for ages their seat of empire on the Cumberland river about Nashville, spread all over Kentucky, and even beyond the Ohio. Their stone cists enclosing human skeletons, with artifacts displaying a high order of artistic skill, abound

in almost every part of the state interspersed with the mounds, mound burials, forts, linear embankments, and other defensive works, identical with those of Ohio. Much of the raw material for the weapons and implements of the stone age, found there, was apparently drawn from Flint Ridge in the latter state and the chert beds of Tennessee. Copper was sparingly brought from Lake Superior, mica in profusion from the Appalachian range, and marine shells from the Atlantic or Gulf of Mexico.

This account of the prehistoric men of Kentucky is a valuable addition to the archaic history of our country—an ably written specialization of primeval life in that state, of equal scientific excellence with the antiquarian work done for Tennessee by General Gates P. Thruston, for Ohio by Squier & Davis; for Wisconsin by I. A. Lapham; and for Georgia by Colonel C. C. Jones. Similar work should be—and eventually will be—done for Illinois and all other states in the Union. The overripe field is still awaiting the gleaners.